

Teacher agency is arguably the **missing piece** in many conversations about curriculum transformation, critical thinking, assessment reform, AI, and the future of education.

We can redesign curriculum frameworks, introduce interdisciplinary units, adopt UDL, and rethink assessment, but none of these innovations become reality unless teachers have the professional agency to make meaningful decisions about learning.

In many ways, there is a direct parallel between what we want for students and what we need for teachers.

If we want students to be:

- Curious
- Independent
- Creative
- Critical thinkers
- Adaptive problem-solvers

Then we need teachers who are empowered to be:

- Designers of learning
- Researchers of practice
- Innovators
- Collaborators
- Decision-makers

The challenge is that many education systems still operate from an industrial model of leadership and accountability. Teachers are often expected to deliver prescribed curricula, prepare students for standardised assessments, and comply with increasingly detailed requirements.

Yet we simultaneously ask them to develop creativity, critical thinking, agency, and innovation in students.

That is a contradiction.

Students rarely experience agency unless their teachers first experience agency.

When teachers are trusted to exercise professional judgement, they are more likely to:

- Design authentic interdisciplinary learning experiences.
- Connect curriculum to local and global issues.
- Experiment with innovative pedagogies.
- Respond to the interests and needs of their learners.
- Foster deeper inquiry rather than simply cover content.

This is particularly important in the age of AI.

Artificial intelligence can provide information, generate content, and automate routine tasks. What it cannot replace is the expertise of a teacher who understands their students, builds relationships, creates culture, and designs meaningful learning experiences.

The future role of teachers may become less about delivering information and more about:

- Curating knowledge.
- Coaching learning.
- Facilitating inquiry.
- Developing judgement.
- Building human capabilities.

But this shift requires trust.

Teacher agency is not professional freedom without accountability. It is the ability to make informed decisions within a shared vision for learning.

Perhaps the schools most prepared for the future will not be those with the newest technology or buildings.

They will be those that create the conditions where both students **and teachers** are empowered to learn, question, innovate, and grow.

If critical thinking, creativity, curiosity, and learner agency are the goals for students, perhaps teacher agency is the foundation that makes them possible.

After all, it is difficult to create future-ready learners in a system that does not trust its teachers to help shape the future.